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Japanese 313

Andrew Painter

Creative Final Project

The Eaters

Background Information

Tamiko is a young American girl living in a zombie-filled world. She is the only human left (or so she believes) among flesh eating zombies called Eaters. Her only friends are her scruffy, lazy cat Yukio and her zombie mother who constantly tries to eat her. After spending the past few years alone with only her cat and zombie mother as company, she has grown delusional.

The manga begins with Tamiko waking up Yukio and informing him that it is time to go visit Mother. As they leave the house, they nonchalantly pass a child zombie, and continue on their way as if it were no big deal. The two friends pass bushes on their way to Mothers house, and fail to notice eyes peering out at them. Tamiko feels a little strange, as if someone is watching them, but moves on. As they arrive at Mothers house, some of Tamiko's delusional tendencies begin to make themselves clear. Mother is an Eater, and clearly wants to take a bite out of Tamiko's arm as she displays a new bracelet. Again, Tamiko brushes the incident off as if it were no big deal. She continues to carry on a conversation with her zombie mother as if her mother is actually capable of participating.

The manga then shifts to a time a few years earlier showing how Tamiko's world became what it is today. Scientists in hazmat suits are shown handling lab rats with the next scene showing a medical research truck crashed into a tree and the lab rats escaping into the street. A cell-to-cell progression shows an escaped rat passing a virus onto other cats and dogs it encounters, which in turn pass it on to their human owners who begin getting sick and end up in hospitals throughout the city. Within a few days of contact, these humans lose all sense of personhood and begin turning on their friends and family in search of flesh. Images show how quickly the virus spreads and soon the people around the world are warned to stay inside and avoid all contact with animals and other humans because of "Cannibal type attacks."

The Company that created the disease and was responsible for the released test animals quickly realizes what is wrong, and begin to quarantine themselves away from the rest of the population. Important political figures, the most financially stable citizens, and the families of the most important scientists go into hiding without making the public aware of what they have unleashed upon the world. Within a year, nearly no human is left "alive," and the Company stays in hiding leaving the Eaters to feed on each other. They soon give up on containing the disease and begin planning to eradicate the Eaters so they can repopulate the human race again.

The scene switches back to present day; Tamiko and Yukio living their normal life as if everything going on around them is normal. Finally, the reader gets to see a view of the two on a television screen through a surveillance camera looking over the shoulder of an unidentified person. It becomes clear to the reader that the Company has been watching Tamiko. As their plan for eradication neared completion, they happened upon Tamiko and realized she had somehow survived the epidemic and has not been affected by the virus. They watch her patiently and realize she must be immune to the virus somehow because she is able to interact with the animals and Eaters, but remains human. They decide she may be the key to finding a vaccine and they may be able to use her for their plan.

This is where the drawings end, but the story continues. Eventually the Company's workers reveal themselves to Tamiko (while wearing body suits to protect themselves from Yukio and his virus spreading abilities) and bring her into their labs for testing. They woo her and tell her she will be responsible for saving the world, but she must work with them. She does not know yet that they want to use her blood as a vaccine to protect themselves, rather than use it to find a cure to save the rest of the human population. She feels a little uneasy about these new people, but goes along for the ride.

One night a young man breaks into her room at the Facility and she is caught by surprise. She has not seen someone her age since the virus began turning her friends and family into Eaters. He tells her the truth about the virus and the Company's real motives. He explains that she is not the only one immune to the disease. He tells her he is part of a group of Immunes, working to find a cure for the virus, and fighting against the Company. He asks her to join their team to fight to restore humanity to what it was, to save their friends and family, and keep the Company from destroying all the humanity that they knew before. The story ends with Tamiko and the boy working to escape from the Facility as the Company soldiers struggle to hold on to their newly attained weapon against the monstrous virus they created. Of course, there is always room left for a love story between Tamiko and the mysterious leader of the Immunes, but that will be saved for later editions.

Creative Process

I must say this project was a lot more work than expected. I did not expect that a 30-second scene in my head would need five pages of images to convey. I found myself editing out details and ideas because it was not possible to include everything without drawing ten pages for a single scene. I did not get to include everything that I wanted to, but I think I made good use of space and incorporating as much as possible. I had to get creative and use some more subtle details to get some of my ideas across.

I wanted to create more interaction between Yukio and Tamiko, but I felt that the introduction was already taking up so many pages and wanted to move on with the story. I feel like Yukio should be a more important character; he is her best friend. I wanted to show more of his lazy tendencies. In my original plan, she had to drag him around everywhere because he is always sleeping. If I were to continue working on this project, I would definitely give him a stronger presence in the story.

I found it really challenging to really express a thought or idea without using significant narration or explanations. For example, creating the scenes showing the virus spreading between animals to humans took some time for me to figure out. I knew I wanted to show the lab rats escaping from a truck, but I had to think of a way to show the reader there was something wrong with them. The idea of having people in hazmat suits handling the lab rats made me laugh and I felt it made the point more obvious. I also thought the use of the color red in the maps and the backgrounds helped to show that something was wrong, without having to actually state it.

The drawing process for this project was also more complicated than expected. Until recently, I did not think I could draw at all, so this project was very difficult. I began by drawing my main characters, trying to create views from different angles and different sizes. I quickly learned that this type of drawing is not my strong suit. I learned that I can draw a really cute character if I spend a long time working on it, but I cannot then go on to draw that same character again from a different view. Because of this, I utilized some traditional manga and anime techniques and used tracing paper to copy my characters and make minor changes.

Most of the work in my manga was drawn by hand with pencil and outlined with black Sharpie. I then scanned each page into my computer, and used the high tech program Microsoft Paint to clean up pages, fix mistakes, and add in text. Some pages I found it helpful to use Microsoft Paint to add boxes, or simple shapes as well, knowing I cannot draw a straight line as well as it can. Also, because I have limited drawing experience, I found certain details, like the research truck, difficult to draw by myself from scratch. For this reason, I used Google Images to find inspiration and ideas. I found a clip art image of an ambulance and used its basic outlines to create the research truck I wanted to use. Once I was satisfied with the drawings, I printed them, colored each page with Sharpies, and scanned them back into the computer as the final pages. I know this is probably more steps than necessary, and the process could have been simplified, but this is what I found necessary based on my materials. This process also had an impact on the quality of the drawings. Scanning, printing, coloring, and scanning again made some images look a lot more pixelated than I had hoped.

Overall, I am pleased with the project I have created. I know it will not be winning any awards, and I do not really plan to show it off to anyone, but I had a reasonably good time creating it. I successfully turned an idea in my head into a solid piece of work, which might be a tiny bit funny. I do have to say, if I were to continue moving forward with this idea, I would want nothing to do with the creative part of it. I would be more than willing to sell the idea to someone, but I know now I have no desire to draw manga, or write the scripts or plot that goes with them.